

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

Policy Formation and Policy Analysis (PADM-GP.2411)
Spring 2021
(updated March 12, 2021)

Lecture and class meeting: Monday 4:55 – 6:35 PM
Instructor Cliff Frasier
Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00 – 3:30 PM

On-line
cliff.frasier@nyu.edu
On-line

Course description:

This course addresses the dual issues of the nature of the policy-making process and the role of analytic activity in that process. The material we cover should deepen students' understanding of the ways that demands for policy and political realities interact in the U.S. context. The course pays close attention to a number of central topics, such as: public opinion; interest groups; state-level policymaking; and normative issues in public policies. We also consider constraints on policymaking, and how policymaking can be evaluated by citizen stakeholders.

Course Objectives

1. To construct an integrated understanding of the politics of policy formation in the United States context.
2. To develop tools for assessing public policies on the state level.
3. To build analytic skills that may transfer to professional settings such as think tanks, policy offices, and further graduate studies.

NYU Classes and Readings and Assignments

All announcements will be delivered through NYU Classes. Slides, if used, will usually be posted before class. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with notice provided as soon as possible through the NYU Classes course page. All materials and assignments will be posted to NYU Classes, with one exception: **you will need to purchase the case study:** “Man on a Wire: Bart Stupak Walks a Tight Line between Obamacare & Abortion.” To access, you will need to click on the following link:

<https://case.hks.harvard.edu/man-on-a-wire-bart-stupak-walks-a-tight-line-between-obamacare-abortion/>

You may then purchase it for \$3.95.

For those who may wish to brush up on basic details about how the American government functions, the textbook *American Government: Power and Purpose* (Theodore Lowi, Benjamin

Ginsburg, and Kenneth Shepsle) is a good place to start. New and used copies can be readily purchased.

Course Requirements

(1) Seminar Participation (20%)

Be engaged and ready to contribute to each class meeting. Active listening, particularly insightful comments, or frequent contributions to discussion can all signal high levels of engagement. Be prepared for short in-class assignments and activities.

A component (5%) of your participation score is based on your composition and distribution of a reading synopsis/commentary. A one-page synopsis of a reading of your choice will be sent to the class by Sunday evening followed by a short presentation of this summary during class. The presentation will conclude with a discussion question based on the summary. We will divvy up weeks and readings on a spreadsheet and will begin this component on February 22.

(2) Take-Home Exams (55% total)

A principle requirement for this course are three take-home exams. They will provide you with an opportunity to critically, creatively, and systematically analyze course readings and theoretical debates. The first exam is worth 15%, the second exam is worth 20%, and the third exam is worth 20%. The later exams may give you opportunities to explore thematic connections to earlier parts of the course. To help prepare for the exams, most weeks there will be posted a question for your reflection — the question will ask you to consider a connection between the week's readings and a topic from earlier weeks. Each exam will be released on a Monday evening after the class meeting and will be due by the following Monday at 12:00 noon. Late exams will result in a 10% grade reduction for each day late. Respond to one out of two or three possible short essay questions that cover the required readings in the weeks preceding each exam. Responses on each exam should total no more than 3 pages (double-spaced) in length.

Case study option:

On March 29, we will discuss the case study: “Man on a Wire.” This case study is the basis of an **optional** assignment: You may write a 3-page analysis of this case, according to guidelines that will be posted on NYU Classes. The grade received for this analysis can substitute for your lowest exam grade (*that is, if your case analysis is graded higher than your lowest exam grade*). So you reserve the privilege of either (a) writing three exams plus the case study, thereby improving on a low exam grade, or (b) substituting the case study for one of your exams.

(3) Final group project (25%)

A group project comparing states on a set of policies. While the project will draw from material across the semester, it will rely on material from weeks 10-14. Guidelines will be posted on NYU Classes. On week 15, each group will give a short presentation of its project.

Policy on recording of zoom class sessions

In this course, routine posting of full audio recordings of lectures is NOT guaranteed. There are several reasons for this, including the overhead of editing (when recordings are made, they are edited to clip out student questions to raise the zoom classroom's comfort level). And your classmates are counting on you to participate in each class meeting, bringing your own perspective to whole-class and small-group conversations. The best ways to learn the material needed for the exams:

- Prepare the assigned readings (skim and read)
- Participate fully in the zoom classroom
- Take notes on the lectures and the readings
- Request office hours to review the material

If you miss a zoom session because of a university-approved absence, the best ways to catch up are:

- Request notes from one or several of your classmates.
- Review the notes, readings, and power point slides.
- Request office hours to review the material.

Academic Integrity

The students and faculty at NYU are very concerned about academic integrity. Each student should have the assurance that the rules of the game are understood by everyone and enforced equally. Students are encouraged to learn and study together. Individual assignments are just that, but mutual assistance is appropriate. New York University has an academic code that is available here:

<https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu>

Every student is expected to maintain academic integrity and is expected to report violations to me.

Additional Administrative Details

- Class absence:
 - If you are not able to attend class and your absence is a university-approved absence (e.g., illness with a doctor's note, illness or death of a friend or family member, religious commitment), please email Professor Frasier only the documentation to verify your absence, and whether you would like to review the lecture materials in a 30-minute meeting during office hours.
- Regarding lateness:
 - For exams and class presentations, students are permitted to take a make-up only if they have a *prior* arrangement with me (a prior arrangement is defined as at least 24 hours in advance) or supply a note from a doctor or university dean excusing their university-approved absence due to serious illness or another family problem. Travel, conflict with another activity or job, and other nonmedical reasons are not acceptable excuses for missing the deadlines printed in this syllabus.

- Turning in an assignment beyond the deadline leads to an automatic grade reduction of 10% of the assignment for each calendar day (including the day of lateness and each subsequent day).
- Technical difficulties uploading assignments to NYU Classes will not excuse late assignments. If NYU Classes is frozen and will not upload, then please email a copy directly to me with a timestamp before the deadline.
- Whenever you email me: please avoid beginning the email with "Hey"; you can normally expect a reply within 24 hours.
- Please use my office hours!! Email me ahead of time to request a time so that I can manage the schedule.

Policy Regarding Disability Services and Programs

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980). Reasonable accommodations can be made for students with qualified disabilities, but only for students who have registered with the Moses Center and provide documentation from that office. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me within the first three weeks of the term.

Wagner Writing Center

Students are encouraged to email Professor Frasier for additional feedback on their written assignments throughout the semester. If you would like additional feedback or training on policy writing, please visit the Wagner Writing Center or the NYU Writing Center.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is the anticipated course schedule, but it may be subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses.

PART 1: Influences on public policy

Week 1 (Feb. 1) Introduction (syllabus)

Week 2 (Feb. 8) Background material; review of agenda setting.

Objective: To review major concepts that provide foundations for this course.

- Bachrach and Baratz (1962) “The Two Faces of Power” *American Political Science Review*.
- Cobb, R.W. and Elder, C.D., 1971. The politics of agenda-building: An alternative perspective for modern democratic theory. *The Journal of Politics*, 33(4), pp.892-915.
- Baumgartner, F.R. 2009. “Interest groups and agendas.” In *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups*.

Week 3 (Feb. 15) Presidents' Day. No class.

Week 4 (Feb. 22) Rational actor model and public opinion

Objective: To understand what policy research means by the rational actor model, and why this model matters for public opinion studies.

Question: What are strengths and limitations to the rational actor approach?

- Meltzer, A.H. and Richard, S.F., 1981. A rational theory of the size of government. *Journal of political Economy*, 89(5), pp.914-927.
- Donald Green and Ian Shapiro (1994), *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, Chapters 1 & 2. Chapter 3 (skim).
- Soroka, S.N. and Wlezien, C., 2008. On the limits to inequality in representation. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 41(2), pp.319-327.

For further reading:

Lax, J.R. and Phillips, J.H., 2009. Gay rights in the states: Public opinion and policy responsiveness. *American Political Science Review*, 103(3), pp.367-386.

Week 5 (March 1) Public opinion and public policy

Objective: To consider both (a) the normative notion and (b) empirical evidence of public opinion as the driver of public policy.

Question: To what degree is public policy a response to public opinion?

General:

- Burstein, Paul. 2010. "Public Opinion, Public Policy, and Democracy." In *Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global Perspective*, edited by Kevin T. Leicht and J. Craig Jenkins. New York: Springer.
- Shapiro, Robert Y. 2011. "Public Opinion and American Democracy." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 75(5).

Issue publics:

- Claassen and Nicholson. 2013. Extreme Voices: Interest Groups and the Misrepresentation of Issue Publics. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 77, No. 4.

For further reading:

Wlezien, Christopher and Stuart Soroka. 2007. "The Relationship between Public Opinion and Public Policy." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*."

Krosnick, J.A., 1990. Government policy and citizen passion: A study of issue publics in contemporary America. *Political behavior*, 12(1), pp.59-92.

Exam 1 will be posted after class.

Exam 1 due: Friday March 5 at 5:00 pm

Week 6 (March 8) Interest groups and public policy (1)

Objective: To become familiar with several models of interest group influence.

Question: What are some reasons why it's difficult to estimate interest group influence on policy?

- Berry and Wilcox. 2018. Chapter 1, "Madison's Dilemma," in *Interest Group Society*. Routledge.
- Pralle, Sarah. 2010. "Shopping around: environmental organizations and the search for policy venues," in Prakash and Gugerty (Eds) *Advocacy Organizations and Collective action*.
- Berry and Arons. 2003. *Voice for Nonprofits*. Pp. 127-145 (section on information politics)

For further reading:

Godwin, Ainsworth and Godwin. 2013. *Lobbying and Policymaking*. Chapter 2, "Models of Influence."

Week 7 (March 15) Interest groups and public policy (2)

Objective: To elaborate our understanding of interest group influence; and to consider how interest group behavior adapts to stages of the policy process.

Question: What are some advantages to thinking about policy demanders in terms of organized groups?

- Garrett, K.N. and Jansa, J.M., 2015. Interest group influence in policy diffusion networks. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 15(3), pp.387-417.
- Berry and Wilcox. 2018. Chapter 9. "The Rise of Networks and Coalitions," in *Interest Group Society*. Routledge.
- Hula, K.W., 1999. Chapters 7 and 9. *Lobbying together: Interest group coalitions in legislative politics*. Georgetown University Press.

For further reading:

Austen-Smith, D. and Wright, J.R., 1994. Counteractive lobbying. *American Journal of Political Science*, pp.25-44.

Week 8 (March 22) Parties, partisanship and policy

Objective: To examine how preferences for policies are handled by the major political parties in the U.S.

Question: How might partisan demands on policy in the United States remain distinct from effects of public opinion and interest groups?

- Bawn, Cohen, Karol, Masket, Noel, and Zaller . 2012. "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* Vol.10, No. 3.
- Egan, Patrick. 2013. *Partisan priorities: How issue ownership drives and distorts American politics*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1, 5. (Skim Chapter 3)
- McCarty, N., 2011. Chapter Nine. The Policy Effects of Political Polarization. In *The transformation of American politics* (pp. 223-255). Princeton University Press.

Exercise: The Conservation Reserve Program

For further reading:

Berry and Wilcox. 2018. Chapter 4 "The Party Connection," in *Interest Group Society*. Routledge.

Grossman, Matt and Casey Dominguez. 2009. "Party Coalitions and Interest Group Networks" *American Politics Research*, Vol. 37, No. 5.

PART II: Institutional Arenas

Week 9 (March 29) Legislatures, legislative behavior; policy diffusion.

Objective: To consider the incremental nature of federal legislative policymaking; and to integrate policy diffusion into our concepts of the policy process.

Question: Why are increases to the federal minimum wage so gradual and slow?

- Pivotal Politics. 1998. Krehbiel. Skim Chapter 1. Read Chapter 2.
- Binder, S., 2018. Dodging the rules in Trump's Republican Congress. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(4), pp.1454-1463.
- Shipan, C.R. and Volden, C., 2012. Policy diffusion: Seven lessons for scholars and practitioners. *Public Administration Review*, 72(6), pp.788-796.

Exercise: Man on a Wire: Bart Stupak Walks a Tight Line Between Obamacare and Abortion (Case Study).

For further reading:

Oleszek, W.J., 2013. *Congressional procedures and the policy process*. Sage. Chapter 1.

Ansolabehere, S., Snyder Jr, J.M. and Stewart III, C., 2001. Candidate positioning in US House elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, pp.136-159.

Exam 2 will be posted after class.

Exam 2 due: Monday April 5 at 12:00 noon

Week 10 (April 5) Bureaucracy and policy implementation

Objective: To consider policymaking in the bureaucracy, including agency problems and the concept of policy loss.

Question: What are some implications to varying levels of discretion exercised by unelected policy workers?

- Levine, Marianne. "Behind the minimum wage fight, a sweeping failure to enforce the law." *Politico*. February 18, 2018.
- Waterman, R.W. and Meier, K.J., 1998. Principal-agent models: an expansion? *Journal of public administration research and theory*, 8(2), pp.173-202.
- Gailmard and Patty. 2007. "Slackers and Zealots: Civil Service, Policy Discretion, and Bureaucratic Expertise."
- McCubbins, M.D., Noll, R.G. and Weingast, B.R., 1987. Administrative procedures as instruments of political control. *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, 3(2), pp.243-277.

For further reading:

Clinton, Bertelli, Grose, Lewis and Nixon. 2012. "Separated Powers in the United States: The Ideology of Agencies, Presidents, and Congress."

Part III: Evaluating Policies Comparisons, accountability, and normative frameworks

Week 11 (April 12) Comparing public policies across the U.S. states

Objective: To prepare project groups to compare public policies across a number of U.S. states.

Question: What are some advantages to examining public policies on the state level?

- Beckett, K. and Western, B., 2001. Governing social marginality: Welfare, incarceration, and the transformation of state policy. *Punishment & Society*, 3(1), pp.43-59.
- Taylor, J.K., Haider-Markel, D.P. and Rogers, B., 2019. Toward a new measure of state-level LGBT interest group strength. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 19(3), pp.334-350.
- Brady, D., Baker, R.S. and Finnigan, R., 2013. When unionization disappears: State-level unionization and working poverty in the United States. *American Sociological Review*, 78(5), pp.872-896.
- Zewde, N. and Wimer, C., 2019. Antipoverty impact of Medicaid growing with state expansions over time. *Health Affairs*, 38(1), pp.132-138.

Week 12 Spring Break Day

Objective: To understand several major schools of thought about policy evaluation.

Question: How does the field of policy evaluation understand its methodology?

- Lindblom, C.E., 1979. Still muddling, not yet through. *Public administration review*, 39(6), pp.517-526.
- In P. Love and J. Stockdale-Otarola (Eds.), *Debate the Issues: Complexity and policy making*. Paris: OECD Insights. Retrieved from: https://www.oecd.org/naec/complexity_and_policymaking.pdf
 “Navigating Wicked Problems” (pp. 28 – 30)
 “Out of Complexity a Third Way” (pp. 31-35)
- Morestin, F., National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy (2012). *A Framework for Analyzing Public Policies: Practical Guide*. National Collaborating Center for Public Health, Public Health Agency of Canada.
- Osterle, A. (2002). Evaluating equity in social policy. *Evaluation*, 8(1). 46-59.

For further reading:

Runhaar, H., Dieperink, C. and Driessen, P., 2006. Policy analysis for sustainable development. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*.

Week 12 assignment: Read the above material, listen to the pre-recorded lecture, and then contribute your response to a class Forum that will open *the previous Friday* to allow students to use the weekend for this assignment. Please post in the Forum by no later than Wednesday evening April 21.

Week 13 (April 26) Normative assessments of public policies

Objective: To become accustomed to thinking about public policies in terms of major normative frames: utilitarianism; egalitarianism; libertarianism.

Question: Given a public policy, which normative framework/s are being expressed?

- DeMesquita, 2016. Chapter 1, pp. 13-31

In class meetings: Final group project

Exam 3 will be posted after class.

Exam 3 due: Monday May 3 at 12:00 noon.

Week 14 (May 3) Assessing policies in terms of public accountability

Objective: To assess policies in light of the public's capacity to identify those who are responsible for policymaking and policy implementation.

Question: Can the public identify those who are responsible for the policy, and how can citizens hold policymakers and policy workers accountable?

- Bertelli, A.M., 2016. Who are the policy workers, and what are they doing? Citizen's heuristics and democratic accountability in complex governance. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 40(2), pp.208-234.

In class meetings: Final group project

For further reading:

Bertelli, A.M. and Sinclair, J., 2016. Democratic accountability and the politics of mass administrative reorganization. *Forthcoming, British Journal of Political Science, NYU Wagner Research Paper*, (2714118).

Manin, Bernard. 1995. *The Principles of Representative Government*, pp. 175-183 (From American Core syllabus)

Manin, Przeworski, Stokes (1999). *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*.

Week 15 (May 10) Group presentations and course wrap-up.

- **May 11 at 5:00 pm** Team reports due.
- **May 13 at 5:00 pm** Last opportunity to turn in the optional case study assignment.